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ABSTRACT

To fulfill the requirements of the hierarchically stratified workplace, schools socialize students in terms of the socioeconomic status of their parents. Forty-five students in two first grade public schools--one in an upper-middle class neighborhood, the other in a lower-middle class neighborhood--were observed. Both classrooms and teachers were representative of their schools and typical of the social class background. Researchers recorded classroom behavior which focused on discipline and values taught (including internal and external control schemes), role of the student in the classroom, and presentation of cognitive materials. Results focus on the internal (self-directed) and external (authority-directed) source of responsibility, since these control schemes also reflect stratification in the workplace. Although children at both schools were socialized to external behavioral standards, only students in the upper-middle class school were personally responsible for maintaining the quality of their academic work. The internalized sense of responsibility parallels the internal controls demanded of their professional parents on the job. Lower-middle class students were taught to rely heavily on external controls provided by the teacher to perform academic tasks. (KC)

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SCHOOLING AND WORK: SOCIAL CONSTRAINTS ON EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

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ABSTRACT

In order to effectively socialize children to competence in the adult roles available to them, schools must produce a highly differentiated pool of graduates to fill the requirements of hierarchically stratified work roles in the United States. Wilcox and Moriarty systematically compare the functioning of two public elementary schools in an upper-middle class and a lower-middle class neighborhood to socialize children along the dimensions of cognitive competence, self-image and relationship to authority. Methodology and detailed research findings are given in the area of relationship to authority. These results suggest that schools differentially socialize children to competence in adult work roles similar to those currently held by their parents.

Introduction

Americans believe in equal educational opportunity, and they have been willing to spend their tax dollars on public schools in the attempt to make it a reality. During the 1960's, the public became increasingly aware that certain groups of people -- the poor, minorities, and women -- were not enjoying the full benefits of the educational system, and special programs were instituted to supplement the educational resources offered to these groups. However, a combination of factors including the questionable effectiveness of these programs, the current recession, and the sudden popularity of the political theme that "government can't do everything", indicate an apparent shift in attitudes away from public and governmental support for educational spending.

Although we share a concern about the future direction of education in the United States, we feel that the current predicament in which the school system finds itself reflects a number of serious misconceptions on the part of educators and others about the role of schools in society. Cultural and social scientific beliefs in the importance of equal educational opportunity and the possibility of upward mobility through individual achievement have led to the prevalent assumption that schools are able to develop and sort out individual differences in an equitable and neutral fashion. (See: Harvard Ed. Review, 1968, Special Issue on Equal Educational Opportunity, and McMarrin, 1971)

What has not been recognized, however, is that this individualistic approach to the function of schools fails to address fundamental issues of schooling as a social institution and its importance in socializing children for available adult roles.

Like other industrial societies, the United States has financed schools to socialize its children to competence as adults. Society pays for schools; schools, in turn, attempt to effectively deliver children prepared to function in the full range of adult social roles. As social institutions, schools are not isolated and autonomous constructs, but integral parts of a social whole in which institutions interact with and affect one another. In particular, schools must relate realistically to the demands of the workplace into which most of their children will move as adults.

In this paper, we will examine the nature of that workplace, arguing that its differentiation and hierarchical stratification necessitate a similar range in the levels of preparation to which students are socialized in schools. We will argue that schools must produce a highly differentiated pool of graduates to match the reality of the the world of work. To illustrate the dynamics of this theory, we will present an anthropological investigation of the functioning of two public schools in an upper-middle class and a lower-middle class neighborhood, relating the experiences of children in those schools to the experience of their parents in another major social institution, work.

The idea that schools have institutional obligations to selectively allocate students to future adult roles is not a new one, although, as we have indicated, earlier studies have seen that function as based on differing individual achievements. (Parsons, 1959) More recently, a number of studies have examined the role of schools in socializing groups of students who differed by race or sex from some comparison population. (Leacock 1969, Rosenfeld, 1971) Social class has been treated

as an additional phenomenon in these studies (e.g., upper-class white schools compared with lower-class black schools), but has gone largely unexamined as a phenomenon in itself. In this study, we have attempted to look specifically at the influence of social class by comparing two primarily white schools.

Children move from schools into the world of work, which, in the United States today is widely recognized as consisting of a finely differentiated hierarchy of occupational roles. Work in America, the report of a special task force to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, describes the conditions under which the 1970 Census indicates over two-thirds of the employed population now works:

... the trend is toward large corporations and bureaucracies which typically organize work in such a way as to minimize the independence of the workers and maximize control and predictability for the organization. (HEW, 1973, p. 21)

As a human activity, work is inescapably both a technical and a social process. In our investigation of the functioning of schools to prepare children for future work roles, we have included both these dimensions by focusing on three aspects of work roles: cognitive and technical skills; differential relationships to authority; and psychological attributes such as self-image, aspirations, and self-presentation.

First, we examine cognitive and technical skills, because work roles are often assumed to be distinguished solely according to that dimension. The most well-established and widely-known example of this perspective is the human capital model (Becker, 1967):

Nearly all economists who use human capital models believe either explicitly or implicitly that the major components of productivity under modern technological conditions are cognitive abilities and technical skills. Schooling imparts cognitive skills, increases "capacity to learn", and teaches some technical skills Differences between individuals in personality traits, values, modes of self-presentation, etc., are assumed to be completely secondary components of productivity and hence are seldom discussed and never systematically incorporated in human capital models. (Levin, et al., forthcoming)

Bowles and Gintis present extensive evidence to suggest that the cognitive aspect of job performance has been greatly overemphasized. They point out that the dollar payoff of education in the work world is related to IQ only tenuously, if at all. (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, p. 9) They document the importance of personality traits and personal attributes to job performance. Nonetheless, cognitive and technical skills are inevitably an aspect of competence at work, and therefore we have included this area in our study.

Next, we look at the personal attribute that corresponds most directly to the hierarchical nature of the workplace, one's relationship to authority. A number of researchers have explored this aspect of work. (Kohn 1969, Gintis 1971, Edwards 1976, Levin forthcoming, Carter and Carnoy 1974) Kohn's impressive statistical study establishes a dichotomy between jobs in which those at lower levels must submit to external authority, while those at higher levels rely on an internalized

motivation for direction. (Kohn, 1969) Kohn contrasts jobs along this internal/external dimension, implying that jobs with high levels of (internal) occupational self-direction offer the opportunity for autonomous, truly self-actualizing modes of conduct.

Bowles and Gintis' review of the literature on work roles leads to a modified view of the occupational structure, in which professionals and managers are not autonomous, but must necessarily rely heavily on internalized norms and standards of practice in order to plan and carry out responsibilities in the best interests of the firm without direct supervision. At the same time, those workers who execute the managers' plans and directives must do so reliably in order for the enterprise to function smoothly. They must respond positively to the external procedures and rules that are defined for them, rather than spontaneously revise their work assignments. In the workplace, an orientation in terms of an internal control scheme is a fundamental executive attribute, just as an orientation toward following rules and external controls is essential to performance in compartmentalized, lower-level jobs. (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, pp. 53 - 148)

Third, we explore some of the psychological attributes identified with work roles and reinforced in the schools -- self-image, aspirations, and self-presentation -- because we recognize that social influences motivate people towards particular roles. Meyer emphasizes this in his summary of the literature on anticipatory socialization, discussing the tendency for people to take on those qualities which are related to widely-legitimated definitions of themselves and of their futures. He points out that the more it is clearly defined and socially agreed that

an individual will acquire a certain position, the more likely s/he is to take on the attributes of that position. (Meyer, 1970) In another vein, Goffman's classic works illustrate the centrality of self-presentation to all aspects of human social behavior (Goffman, 1959), including behavior at work, and Bowles and Gintis underline its relevance to differential work roles. (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, p. 141) Sennet and Cobb's interviews with American workers sensitively reflect the consequences of school experiences for future self-image on the job. (Sennet and Cobb, 1972)

In order to function effectively to prepare children for existing adult roles, schools must socialize their pupils with skills and attributes consonant with those required by the structure of the economy, including those we have just indicated. To match a highly differentiated and stratified collection of work roles, schools must produce an equally differentiated pool of graduates. They must produce drop-outs for the drop-out level jobs just as they produce Ph.D.'s for the Ph.D. level jobs. The process of socialization is not an open-ended one.

In a society with a work hierarchy such as ours, schools act as gatekeepers to the world of work. Meyer speaks of schools as each having a charter, an institutionalized social definition of what it is expected to produce. (Meyer, 1970) Students from some schools (or particular tracks within a school) are institutionally identified as potentially valuable commodities in a way recognizable to other institutions which guard the gates to influential levels of the social hierarchy, such as universities and major employers. Different schools are recognized for producing different kinds of products. Brookover and Erickson comment on

the process through which these different products are produced:

....society defines the level of ability and learning which will be achieved. Almost all children can and will learn whatever is defined as appropriate and required in the culture, and will fail to learn those types of behavior that society defines as inappropriate, improper, or not expected of them. Almost 100% of Americans learn to drive on the right-hand side of the road and almost all Britishers learn to drive on the left-hand side of the road. At a more abstract and verbal level, we recognize that almost 100% of the children in every society in the world learn to speak and communicate in an abstract, complex set of verbal symbols which we call language.... (Yet) Unlike our demand that all children learn to speak the language, our educational system demands that some children not learn algebra or physics and a wide range of other behavior. The result of....the(se) educational practices....is a school system that produces widely varied types of achievement in student groups classified and labelled as different in ability, interests, and needs. (Brookover and Erickson, 1975, pp. 383 - 4)

From this perspective, the skills which a child learns in school depend more on the social expectations for that child than on something which is inherent in that child. There is a good deal of evidence that the social expectations which lead to the classification and labelling process to which Brookover and Erickson refer are directly related to the identification by

the society of different groups of people with different work roles. We are referring to groups such as class, sex, and ethnicity, all of which are linked to recurring patterns of occupational roles. Indeed, in terms of sex and ethnicity, it has become almost trite to point out that most company presidents are white males, while most people in jobs at the lowest level -- domestic servants, cannery workers, farm laborer, and so on -- are women and minorities. And, in terms of social class, although there is some degree of individual mobility in the society, the majority of people remain in a class position similar to that of their parents. (Stanley et. al., 1956, p. 219) Occupational role has been statistically demonstrated to define social class status better than any other variable. (Kahl and Davis, 1955)

A developing body of material analyzes the mechanisms through which groups of people are allocated to positions in the labor market. This theory of labor market segmentation sees role allocation not as a result of differing amounts of "human capital" possessed by groups, but rather as the result of a multitude of structural and historical characteristics fundamental to the economy. Space prevents a detailed description of this theory here; the interested reader is referred to other sources. (Carter and Carney, 1974; Levin et. al., forthcoming)

We have chosen to explore one group allocation mechanism, that of social class, in terms of its effect on classroom socialization for future work roles, according to the three dimensions we have previously outlined.

Investigating the Function of Schools: Sample and General Methodology

The literature suggests that these characteristics -- **cognitive** and technical complexity, differential relationship to authority and personal attributes like self-image -- delineate important differences between upper-middle class and lower-middle class jobs. However, they can only be accurately observed in the context of subtle interaction patterns that do not lend themselves to statistical survey techniques or short-term intensive studies. In order to observe these particular phenomena, it was necessary to adopt a long-term, in-depth methodology. Consequently, we narrowed our sample to two classrooms in the hopes that this more focused comparison would yield a richness of data that could not be obtained by other methods.

We sought two public elementary schools that fit the research design in terms of three criteria: socioeconomic status in mainstream upper-middle and lower-middle class neighborhoods (especially by income and occupation), representativeness of the two teachers (respected, experienced, and well integrated into their respective districts), and accessibility to personal contacts essential to an in-depth study. After an exhaustive screening of 31 classrooms in 10 different schools, we selected Collis P. Huntington Elementary School and Joe Smith Elementary School. We focused on one first grade classroom in each school. We chose first grades rather than later years in order to observe the socialization process in full force. The principals directed us to the particular classroom we observed at each school. The teachers they chose were a comfortable part of their respective worlds; both were highly regarded by colleagues, and both had taught for over 10 years. Initial observations satisfied us that both classrooms were representative of their schools and typical of the class

backgrounds we wished to investigate.

Collis P. Huntington School serves an upper-middle class neighborhood where many residents (50% of the fathers of children we observed) are self-employed, and most work as professionals, managers, and administrators. The 1970 Census reports their median annual income at \$14,535 and median educational level at 15.4 years. With inflation, salaries have clearly risen since 1970; we have no accurate measure of this, although we do know that current housing values in the area start around \$90,000. The Huntington neighborhood is virtually all-white.

The neighborhood around Joe Smith School is a good example of a lower-middle class community -- certainly not slums, but a rather run-down suburbia where most parents are employed in skilled blue collar jobs and routinized, low-pay work. This is reflected in the 1970 Census estimation of their median annual income at \$9,826, and in the corresponding valuation (under \$40,000) of their tract homes. Median education is 12.2 years, or slightly more than high school graduation. Both in its socioeconomic background and in its ethnic composition (mostly white, with a representative sprinkling of families from various minority groups), the Smith neighborhood comes close to being an all-American average place to live.

In addition to socioeconomic characteristics that made these two neighborhoods a desirable choice in terms of our research design, patterns of school performance on state-mandated achievement tests also reflected the dynamic we wished to observe. Smith scores fell close to the state median, and Huntington scores were well above it. While children at Smith scored in the 67th and 69th percentiles on Grade 2

and 3 reading tests in 1974-75, by the 6th grade they had dropped to the 55th percentiles. At Huntington, on the other hand, 2nd and 3rd graders started at the 99th percentile, and maintained their reading scores at the 96th percentile level in 6th grade.

Although we had begun with some definite ideas about the nature of work roles, our purpose was to record actual classroom behavior, rather than to observe in terms of pre-determined categories. Following an anthropological methodology, we spent several days making generalized observations in the two first grades in order to extract a sense of the emic, or indigenously meaningful, categories used by both teachers (Goodenough, 1970). After this initial groundwork, we developed simplified observation instruments. They focused on three areas of classroom behavior that corresponded to our analysis of significant differences between upper-middle and lower-middle class work:

- discipline and values taught (including internal/external control schemes),
- role of the student in the classroom (structured self-presentation and child participation), and
- presentation of cognitive materials.

We spent a minimum of 12 in-class hours recording all interactions in the single area of observation agreed upon for a given time period. Fieldwork in the classroom extended over three months, for a total of almost 60 in-class hours at Huntington and 106 hours at Smith going into the preparation of statistical summaries alone. Many more hours were spent observing in other classrooms, talking with teachers, counselors, and administrators, and interviewing most of the parents of children in both rooms in order to reassure ourselves that the teachers we had chosen were not atypical of their schools as a whole. Having only one continuous observer in each school made it impossible to

completely control for observer bias, but we met regularly, sometimes daily, to coordinate perceptions and systematic recording techniques.

In such a brief article, we are prevented from painting a complete picture of the systematic techniques we developed to record the subtle yet pervasive characteristics that link schooling and work. Instead, we offer an example of our treatment of the special methodological problems posed by only one area of classroom behavior, that of discipline and the transmission of values. Research findings in other areas were arrived at through the same, or similarly detailed and specialized, methodologies.

Discipline and the Transmission of Values: Methodology

Like other aspects of the socialization process, the teaching of discipline and values has both present and future implications. It communicates principles of conduct according to which the child is expected to make decisions and act on them. At the grade school level, values define both present priorities and future aspirations. Since work is an integral part of the futures of most children, it is important to look at the kinds of discipline and values they are being taught, and how these things prepare them for future roles in the world of work.

In order to define the value structure in both classrooms, we devised a means of systematizing the teachers' discipline or control schemes using teacher/child interactions (verbal exchanges) as the unit of observation. We noted both the form and approach (strategy) the teacher used, and the value content (message) of each interaction, and developed these observations into an elaborate classification system of 55 strategies and 32 messages, all reflecting the teachers' own (emic)

categories. This provided a very rich data base, accurate in its details but rendered unwieldy because of them. Consequently, after a careful analysis of patterns revealed by this emic system, we re-classified our observations into an etic, or analytical, system of eight variables which seemed relevant to our inquiry and could reasonably represent the more detailed information we had gathered. Our re-classification was based on four contrasting pairs of variables:

- internal/external source of responsibility,
- present/future orientation,
- positive/negative affect, and
- cognitive/behavioral application.

Although the distinctions between these contrasting variables blur occasionally in practice, we found them a useful construct for conceptualizing and recording patterns in the behavior we observed.

To identify significant differences between the teachers' control schemes, we computed school scores for each of these eight variables based on the mean number of interactions/child ($n=45$; 20 children at Huntington and 25 at Smith). These scores reflected the percentage of total observations in each classroom (571 interactions at Huntington and 509 at Smith) that contained at least one occurrence of a given variable. An arc-sine transformation normalized the distribution of these scores (Eisenhart, 1947) so that t-tests and an analysis of variance could be performed to test the relative effects of four independent variables: school, sex, high/low ability group and white/non-white ethnicity.

Although this analysis of variance showed that some patterns of effects could be explained by various combinations of sex, ability group,

and ethnicity, the vast majority of significant differences were best explained by school identity, while controlling for the other three variables. Again, space limitations prevent us from presenting the full array of research findings confirmed by this statistical technique. Instead, we summarize our results for only one pair of contrasting variables, that of internal vs. external source of responsibility. To our knowledge, these two variables have not been systematically observed in schools before. Their inclusion in this study represents a conceptual innovation that has enabled us to look more closely at class differences between schools because of its close correspondence with hierarchical authority structures in the world of work.

Internal/External Disciplines: Research Findings

As we have already pointed out, internal/external control schemes reflect stratification in the workplace, where higher level workers who function without immediate supervision must be able to make decisions based on internalized standards, and lower level workers must be counted on to follow their directives reliably. Blue collar jobs necessitate an ability to respond positively to procedures and rules defined by an external authority source. Professional and managerial jobs necessitate an ability to function independently. This does not imply independence from all norms and standards of practice; rather, it necessitates particularly reliable adherence to them:

That is, the vast majority of workers in higher levels of the hierarchy of production are by no means autonomous, self-actualizing and creatively self-directed. Rather, they are

probably supersocialized so as to internalize authority and act without direct and continuous supervision to implement goals and objectives relatively alienated from their own personal needs. (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, p. 145)

This understanding of the nature of higher levels of work led us to expect an emphasis on internalized values and standards of achievement at Huntington. Conversely, we expected that the socialization of Smith children would emphasize the same reliance on external rules and directives that has been suggested as essential to performance in the blue collar jobs held by their parents.

In schools, the internal/external distinction is reflected in both teacher expectations and the nature of responsibilities given to the children. We classified as internal those interactions in which the teacher treated the child as a self-directed person who was capable of handling a process in an independent way and choosing the consequences of his/her activity. In an internal interaction, the teacher throws the responsibility back to the child to think and shape his/her activity in a manner that promotes or relies upon internalized values, self-images, standards or goals. The following examples from the Huntington classroom illustrate internal interactions:

Tommy, talk to yourself quietly and tell yourself where you are and what's expected of you.

You really goofed off. Why do you do this to yourself?

Now you boys don't use good judgment when you come to the circle. Your legs are touching his, so pretty soon you're

going to be kicking each other. See, the way you sit can help you study.

Our fifteen minutes are up. Have you used them wisely?

At Smith, many of the teacher's internal-based control statements had applications in the affective domain, rather than in the area of academic skills. She was consistent in her refusal to mediate disagreements among the children, forcing them to take the initiative to resolve their own difficulties:

(to two children who came asking her judgment as to which could use a particular game)

I don't know what happened. You two will have to decide that yourselves.

These are all internal means of control, because the teacher is asking the children to think for themselves; she expects them to further their own best interests without her direct supervision.

By contrast, in an external interaction, the teacher is the one who does the thinking. She treats the child as a person who is expected to follow certain standard rules, procedures or directions laid down by herself and made salient by her authority and direct power. The following examples from the Smith classroom illustrate external interactions:

You have a responsibility to get that paper done and I want it done now.

You have an assignment. Sit down and get busy.

You guys have to take the responsibility of learning.

Come on, you should be with the program. Eyes should

be up here, pencils down.

Two ways of establishing order within the classroom that were common at Smith -- commands resting on the authority of the teacher or some other adult, and rule repetition -- are external means of control, because they reinforce a pattern in which the impetus for behavior does not come from the children themselves, but from some external rule or authority figure who issues rules and directives.

As expected, Huntington showed a consistently higher proportion of internal-based interaction than did Smith, and the difference between the two schools was very significant ($p=.001$), especially for interactions involving cognitive skills ($p=.001$). However, both schools showed high levels of external behavioral controls.

These results indicate that children at both schools were being socialized to respond to external behavioral standards, but only the Huntington children were being taught that they were personally responsible for maintaining the quality of their academic work. The Huntington teacher took time to establish internalized standards of achievement that would motivate them to perform well without her constant supervision. The internalized sense of responsibility she emphasized parallels the internal controls demanded of their professional parents on the job.

At Smith, this internal component was largely missing. Smith children were taught to rely heavily on external controls provided by the teacher, particularly in the area of academic tasks. By default, they had little exposure to the process of internalizing standards of achievement, although they were taught internalized norms for settling disputes among themselves. When the dominant Smith control

scheme based on external restrictions is applied to future work situations, it seems a good preparation for lower-level jobs in which reliable rule-following is an essential component.

Conclusion

Patterns of internal/external relationship to authority stressed at Huntington and Smith correspond closely to the relative positions of those children's parents in upper-middle and lower-middle class jobs. What do we conclude from this information?

From an anthropological perspective, the principal function of schooling is to socialize children so they will be capable of assuming the adult social roles available to them (Gearing, 1973). Informed by an examination of the differentiated nature of those adult roles in the world of work, we have systematically observed the functioning of two public elementary schools to socialize children along three dimensions, presenting our results only in the area of relationship to authority. These research findings are only part of a larger comparative ethnography which documents significant differences between the schools in the areas of cognitive skills and self-image as well. Our results suggest that schools are differentially socializing their students to fill adult work roles similar to those currently held by their parents. (Wilcox and Moriarty, 1976)

Children in the upper-middle class school are not being taught in the same way, nor are they receiving the same content as those in the lower-middle class school. The dominant bias in American culture points to an individualistic interpretation of these results -- that the differences we have documented are simply a reflection of the personal idiosyncracies of the two teachers involved. We would argue that retraining these teachers or even replacing them with new ones would not significantly

change the patterns we have observed. Children are treated differently at Smith than at Huntington not because the teachers are different or because the teachers are not both committed to the ideal of equal educational opportunity, but because the social context is different. Interviews with other teachers and observations in other classrooms at both schools, together with a fuller ethnographic comparison of both neighborhoods, confirm and define those differences along the lines of social class. The two teachers reflect the larger social dynamic in which family background is perceived as an index of inevitable adult roles. At Smith, teachers saw that background as "culture of poverty", and made a number of disparaging remarks about the neighborhood, while those at Huntington even over-estimated the wealth and status of the parents there (Wilcox and Moriarty, 1976). Children in both schools were unconsciously yet consistently socialized in particular ways congruent with their parents' level of participation in the world of work. Social class background was obvious to both teachers and children at the two schools, and it structured in the same imbalance in social relationships at the schools as might be found in any bureaucratic organization. Until inequalities in the structure of work are changed, it is unrealistic to expect any teacher, however trained, to be free of the pervasive stereotyping fostered by everyday social experience that constantly recognizes and draws conclusions from social class status.

Our research findings imply that without significant changes in social stratification by class background and its basis in the hierarchical structure of work, it is not likely that similarly structured patterns will be eliminated from schools, no matter how much money is

spent toward equalizing educational opportunity. Schools must prepare children for roles in a real, not an idealized world. Equality and full human development can only be fostered by the schools when the adult social roles into which children move are changed to support and rely upon these qualities as well.

We would suggest that a good deal of the energy which has gone into school reform should be redirected into democratizing our economic institutions. We believe that this is the most direct path to those familiar goals of equality and justice, and that the path through the schools will be longer and much more tortuous, if not an outright failure.

We are not saying that schools are not important. We disagree strongly with Jencks' conclusion that variations in what children learn in school depend largely on variations in what they bring to school, rather than on variations in what schools offer them. (Jencks, 1972, p. 53) This study has demonstrated the substantial effect that schools have in recreating the social distinctions that the society needs in order to have adult citizens functioning in all the necessary roles in its economy. Contrary to popular beliefs, schools relate effectively to the real, stratified world of work in this society. Because of this, only a fundamental restructuring of the economy can effect basic changes in the way schools socialize children.

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